

Remark

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this application as amended. Claims 10, 16-18, 24, 27, 30 and 36 have been amended. No claims have been cancelled. Therefore, claims 1-38 are present for examination.

Claim Objections

Claims 9-11 are objected to for being exact replicas of claims 1, 3 and 4 respectively. Applicant respectfully submit that Claim 9 does not include the express limitation "on a first Local Area Network (LAN)" as recited in Claim 1. Accordingly, Claim 9 has a broader scope than Claim 1. The same applies to Claims 10-11.

35 U.S.C. §112 Rejection

The Examiner has rejected claim 18 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Claim 18 has been amended to more clearly define the subject matter of the field.

35 U.S.C. §102 Rejection

Hall

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-7, 9-12, 15-19, 27, 28, 33-36 and 38 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Hall, U.S. Patent No. 5,890,001 ("Hall"). The present invention as recited in, for example, Claim 1, recites at least two significant differences from Hall.

First, Claim 1 recites "a first token to circulate among members of the first group... [and] a second token to circulate among members of the second group." Hall does not suggest a first token *and* a second token, but only means for passing a single token. Hall at Column 1, lines 50-51 states

“means for passing a token around said ring through said registers.” Hall further teaches at Column 7, lines 3-14 that after a job is completed, the system checks to determine if any additional jobs are waiting. If additional jobs are waiting, *the* token is again passed around the rings. These passages indicate that only one token is to be passed among all the rings. Applicants are unable to find any suggestion that there be a first token for a first group and a second token for a second group.

Second, Claim 1, recites “communications among the members of the first group … [and] communications among the members of the second group… independent of the first group.” Hall teaches that each ring must wait for the previous ring to finish with the token before receiving it. Hall at Column 5, lines 35-36 teaches that “the token is passed one step forward to the next register in the ring.” Hall at Figure 5 further teaches that the token steps, in order, through the outer ring and then continues to step, in order, through each of the inner rings. Therefore, Hall does not suggest the members of the second group to be independent of the first group.

For both of these reasons, among others, Claim 1 is believed to be allowable over the references. Claims 9, 12, 17, 20, 24, 27, 33, and 36 contain one or more of the limitations discussed above, among others, and are believed to be allowable therefore. The remaining claims are dependent upon one of the above claims and are believed to be allowable therefore as well as for the express limitations set forth in each claim, respectively.

35 U.S.C. §103 Rejection

Hall in view of Minyard

The Examiner has rejected claims 8, 13, 14, 20-26, 29-32 and 37 under 35 U.S.C. §103 (a) as being unpatentable over Hall in view of Minyard, U.S. Patent No. 6,553,508 (“Minyard”). Minyard was not cited for and does not show the features absent from Hall as discussed above. Accordingly, this rejection is respectfully traversed.

Conclusion

Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections have been overcome by the amendment and remark, and that the claims as amended are now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the rejections be withdrawn and the claims as amended be allowed.

Invitation for a Telephone Interview

The Examiner is requested to call the undersigned at (303) 740-1980 if there remains any issue with allowance of the case.

Request for an Extension of Time

Applicants respectfully petition for an extension of time to respond to the outstanding Office Action pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a) should one be necessary. Please charge our Deposit Account No. 02-2666 to cover the necessary fee under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17(a) for such an extension. Charge our Deposit Account.

Please charge any shortage to our Deposit Account No. 02-2666.

Respectfully submitted,
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